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ABSTRACT

A rating scale was developed that could be used to test Raynor's construct of perceived instrumentality--that the perceived importance of a particular achievement (such as a good grade) to the student's future (career) influences the student's efforts to achieve the goal. The scale was developed to study the perceived importance of learning French as a foreign language for Canadian high school students. Four types of items were included: (1) the importance of French in achieving specific goals; (2) the enriching aspects of the French language in six common young people's activities; (3) the usefulness of French in these activities; and (4) the importance of French to future plans. The final, 20 item test was administered to groups of 151 and 333 students; reliabilities were .91 and .89. Test-retest reliability over a four-week period was .84. The validity of the scale was supported when perceived instrumentality was shown to be related to grades in a previous French course; probability of success in the present course; decision to take additional French courses; and decision to take the present French course if it had been optional. The scale was judged to be reliable, valid, and useful for further research. (GDC)

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Development of the Perceived Instrumentality of French as a Second Language Scale

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Abstract

The aim of this study was the development of a reliable and valid measure of perceived instrumentality as defined in Atkinson and Raynor's achievement motivation theory that would apply to second-language learning.

The final version of the instrument consists of twenty Likert-type scale items; alpha coefficient = .916 (n = 151); item-total correlations are between .39 and .69; the test-retest correlation is .836 (n = 145).

The instrument is to be one of those used to determine whether the achievement theory can provide a rationale for a better comprehension of factors affecting second-language learning.

Development of the Perceived Instrumentality of French as a Second Language Scale

A number of researchers working in collaboration with Atkinson on the theory of achievement motivation have contributed to the further elaboration of the theory. Raynor (1969, 1974) is one of those. His addition of the concept of perceived instrumentality has helped to overcome the limited conception that as regards situational components, only the expectations of success and failure in the immediate activity influence the tendency to engage in an activity. His elaboration of the theory has brought into clearer focus the fact that when a task is perceived as important to attain future goals it accentuates the strength of the tendency to engage in the activity. In his elaboration of the theory, Raynor studies the contingent and noncontingent path situations. A contingent situation is one where success in the immediate task is considered essential if the individual is to be allowed to continue towards his goal. Failure at such a task is considered to mean loss of opportunity to proceed further.

If one is to adequately test Raynor's contributions to the theory, it is necessary that the researcher be able to measure the extent to which the research subject feels

that his future success is contingent on his present performance. In laboratory settings or under tightly controlled experimental situations it has been possible to create situations where future opportunity to engage in some task was contingent upon success in the immediate task. In real life situations also contingencies do exist. However, in order to determine their effect on individual behavior, it is necessary to be able to measure accurately the subject's perception of this contingency. This implies the necessity of valid measures of perceived instrumentality.

Most of the research to date has been conducted under laboratory or tightly controlled experimental situations. In real life situations, Raynor (1970) has attempted to assess the perceived instrumentality of grades for students in an introductory psychology course. To do this he asked two questions: (1) How important to you is getting a good grade in Introductory Psychology for having your career plans work out? (2) To what extent do you believe getting a good grade in the Introductory Psychology course will help you to do well in your chosen career? These two questions were scored on a five-point and four-point scale respectively. There also seems to be little information available

regarding the reliability or validity of these two questions as a measure of perceived instrumentality.

Because of the limited work which has been done in real life situations, because of the necessity to develop tests of perceived instrumentality that are specific to given situations, and because of the interest of the researchers to test Raynor's contribution as it relates to second language learning, it was proposed to develop a test for high school students to measure their perceived instrumentality of a second language. In today's context, it is reasonable to suggest that in a Canadian setting there would be widely different opinions as to the usefulness of a second language in one's future.

Insert Table 1 about here

Item specifications for the test are shown in Table 1. Four basic types of item were proposed. These include (1) the importance of French in helping to achieve specific goals; (2) the enriching aspects of the French language in six common activities in which young people would engage; (3) the usefulness

of the French language in each of these common activities; (4) the importance of the French language to future plans. In early versions of the test an additional item was included. In this item respondents were asked to rank the importance of four school subjects including French in relationship to their importance for future plans. Since this is a forced choice type item it was anticipated that this item would probably not be useful; this proved to be so and the item was later eliminated. For each of the items a four-point scale was established so that the range of possible scores was from 20 to 80.

The first draft of the items was submitted to five graduate students at Université de Moncton who were enrolled in a "French as a Second Language" course. Upon receiving comments of this group, the items were modified; the second version of the test was then administered to 53 grade 10 and 11 anglophone students who were enrolled in a French as a Second Language course; in all additional testing, the subjects who responded to the items were grade 10 and 11 anglophone students enrolled in French as a Second Language courses in their high school. Item analysis data from the 53 students were examined. Again minor modifications were made to test items. The test was then submitted to 201 subjects. At this time, the item in

which subjects were asked to rank the four subject matter courses was still included. It became obvious, at this time, that this item should be deleted and it was in all future administrations of the test. For the 201 subjects, the reliability coefficient was found to be .89. The item-total test correlations ranged between .36 and .63. Based on the item analysis data, there were some very minor revisions made in the items.

Insert Table 2 about here

The final version of the 20 item test was then administered to 151 students. At a later date the test was re-submitted to 333 students. The alpha reliability coefficients were .91 (n = 151) and .89 (n = 333) respectively. This certainly seemed most satisfactory. The item-total test correlations for each of these two groups are reported in Table 2. All items seemed to be contributing in a satisfactory manner. Based on this data and the alpha coefficients, it would certainly seem that the internal consistency of this scale is adequate.

A test re-test reliability of .84 (n = 145) over a four week interval was found. This again seemed to be an

adequate correlation coefficient.

Insert Table 3 about here

As a check on the validity of the scale, it was hypothesized that perceived instrumentality should be related to four variables. These variables were (1) marks obtained on a previous French course; (2) perceived probability of success in the present course; (3) decisions to take more French courses; and (4) a decision to take the present course if it had been an optional course. These relationships were investigated with the 151 subjects and with the 333 subjects identified earlier. The results are shown in Table 3. The range for these relationships was between .27 and .46; these are of sufficient magnitude to provide support for the validity of the scale as a measure of perceived instrumentality.

Based on the above results, it was concluded that the "Perceived Instrumentality of French as a Second Language" scale was a valid and reliable measure of the usefulness of the French language for future plans. It is proposed to use this instrument in research to test the useability of Raynor's construct of perceived instrumentality.

TABLE 1

Item Specifications for "Perceived Instrumentality of French as a Second Language" Scale

Content	No. of Items
Identify four important goals: for each goal, respondent appraises the "help" obtained from a good grade in French	
Long term goals - next ten years	2
Short term goals - next few months	2
To what extent would a good knowledge of French enrich activities such as	
Watching T.V.	1
Working	1
Reading	1
Meeting friends	1
Listening to radio	1
Attending social activities	1
How much use would be made of French in each of the six activities listed above	6
Importance to future plans of	
A good grade in French	1
Being able to read French	1
write French	1
speak French	1
TOTAL	20

TABLE 2

Corrected Item-Total Test Correlations for the "Perceived Instrumentality of French as a Second Language" Scale for Two Groups

Item #	*Corrected Item - Total Test Correlations	
	Group I n = 151	Group II n = 333
1	.39	.40
2	.49	.37
3	.45	.38
4	.45	.27
5	.53	.45
6	.59	.50
7	.69	.61
8	.60	.56
9	.49	.62
10	.46	.55
11	.56	.50
12	.64	.50
13	.63	.57
14	.65	.54
15	.53	.57
16	.55	.57
17	.62	.56
18	.67	.63
19	.66	.61
20	.69	.60

*Correlation of each item with the sum of the remaining 19 items

TABLE 3

Pearson Correlation between "Perceived Instrumentality of French as a Second Language" Scale and Four Variables

Perceived Instrumentality	French Marks	Estimated Probability of Success	Decision to Enroll	Planning More Courses
Group I	.31 (n = 150)	.46 (n = 149)	.46 (n = 151)	.46 (n =151)
Group II	.27 (n = 328)	.32 (n = 328)	.46 (n = 330)	.45 (n = 331)

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